

UC FARM SMART News

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

SPRING 2015

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Winter Visitor Program Has a Successful Run



1. Harvesting romaine lettuce

UC FARM SMART's annual Winter Visitor Program featured 26 tour dates at the UC Desert Research and Extension Center from mid-January to the end of February. The program capitalizes on the influx of winter visitors to the southwest desert region - over 80,000 winter visitors visit nearby Yuma, AZ each year.

DREC will be hosting a Sustainability Day Camp for 4th – 6th grade students June 15-19. Call 760-356-3067 for more information.

UC FARM SMART is an educational outreach program of the Desert Research and Extension Center in Holtville, CA. It began in 2001 and continues to grow and educate visitors of all ages. Contact UC FARM SMART at 760-356-3067, surie@ucanr.edu, on the web at drec.ucanr.edu or facebook.com/UCfarmsmart or 1004 E Holton Rd Holtville, CA.

Continued: UC FARM SMART Winter Visitor Program

The Winter Visitor Program welcomes the local community as well as winter visitors. Visitors include current and retired farmers from all over the U.S. and Canada and the general public.

Each year, guests taste a recipe featuring local products. 2015's recipe was carrot ginger soup, highlighting the Imperial Valley's carrot production. In 2013, the Imperial Valley produced carrots on nearly 14,000 acres for a total gross value of just under \$70 million. Over 32 tons of carrots are produced per acre.



2. Harvested carrots in the Imperial Valley await shipment (photo courtesy Western Farm Press)

Visitors also participate in a classroom presentation covering Imperial Valley agricultural practices, irrigation, important crops, and environmental issues including the Salton Sea. Visitors enjoy a salad bar lunch and entertainment before boarding hay wagons for a field tour of the Desert Research and Extension Center. On the field tour, guests learn about current and former UC research and harvest vegetables including kale, broccoli, lettuce, beets, turnips, swiss chard, and more. UC FARM SMART would like to thank the volunteers and DREC staff who make the program possible, as well as the many visitors who help to make the program a success.

By the Numbers. . .

Program Reach for Winter Visitor Program: 1917

March Program Reach for K-12 Program: 1413

Total Cumulative Program Reach (2001 – present): 110,029

Southern Californians get another reason to love pizza

Author: Jeannette E. Warnert, UCANR

People love pizza, so they are sure to enjoy the new garden growing at the UC Desert Research and Extension Center in Holtville. A circle planted with wheat, tomatoes, bell peppers, herbs and spices, the garden looks like and produces the ingredients for pizza.



3. The completed "pizza garden".

"Pizza can be a healthy meal, if you build it right," said Stephanie Collins, outreach assistant at the Desert REC. "We can teach kids to add vegetables and educate them about whole grains and non-fat cheese."

Collins initially envisioned the pizza garden teaching tool when she joined UC Cooperative Extension four years ago as a nutrition educator. The recent removal of a large tree stump made the location available.

The pizza garden will be part of the center's UC FARM SMART program, in which about 5,000 school children and "snowbird" winter residents annually visit the station to learn about UC's ongoing agricultural research in the desert area, tour the 255-acre facility on a hay wagon and taste products that are grown in the vicinity.

When they visit the pizza garden, they'll learn many of their favorite foods come from plants grown nearby in the productive agricultural region. The garden is divided into four wedges. The wheat, which is used to make the pizza crust, and alfalfa, which is an important feed for dairy cows, the source of cheese, is grown in one wedge.

"Alfalfa is cheese in the making," Collins said.

Tomatoes, onions and arugula are planted in the next wedge. The tomatoes are used for traditional sauce and onions are a healthy and flavorful topping, but arugula?

"Arugula is great on pizza," Collins said. "It has a strong, peppery flavor."



4. Bell peppers in the pizza garden.

Pizza Garden continued

In another section, visitors can smell, feel and taste the herbs that season pizza sauce. Oregano, basil, sage, thyme, chives, parsley and rosemary fill the third wedge.

The fourth section holds bell peppers and rhubarb. "The rhubarb is just for fun," Collins said.

The garden is encircled with marigolds for the appearance of crust, and the wedges are dotted with a variety of non-pizza plants, like ornamental kale, vinca and lavender. These plants also serve an educational purpose, said Sam Urie, the UC FARM SMART manager at the Desert REC.

"A diversity of plants attracts beneficial insects, so they help the garden out," Urie said.

Amidst historic California drought, UC FARM SMART continues water conservation education

You've no doubt heard that California is facing a historic drought, and that Gov. Jerry Brown recently issued mandatory cutbacks in urban water use. While California's Imperial Valley depends solely upon Colorado River water for both its agriculture and urban use, it continues to be of utmost importance to educate visitors to FARM SMART about water conservation. K-12 students are taught simple ways to conserve water at home. Older students and adults are introduced to UC's California Institute for Water Resources (ciwr.ucanr.edu) and visitors are shown research efforts to conserve water including drip irrigation and deficit irrigation methods.



5. FARM SMART garden uses drip irrigation.

WHAT'S GROWIN' ON?

Today's
Temperature:
93° Fahrenheit
Current Crops:

The FARM SMART garden is hanging on, with mostly root vegetables currently available such as beets and radishes. Soon the bell pepper, watermelon, and zucchini squash planted in the south garden will be ready to harvest.



WHAT'S GROWIN' ON?



Students inspect purple carrots



Salad during Winter Visitor Program



Purple Cauliflower



Daikon Radish



Alfalfa



Bell Peppers

FARM SMART RECIPES

Carrot Ginger Soup

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 onions, peeled and chopped
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 pounds carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons grated ginger
- 1 cup whipping cream
- Salt and white pepper
- Sour cream
- Parsley for garnish

Directions:

In a 6-quart pan, over medium high heat, add butter and onions and cook, stirring often, until onions are limp. Add broth, carrots, and ginger. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until carrots are tender when pierced.

Remove from heat and transfer to a blender. Don't fill the blender more than half way, do it in batches if you have to. Cover the blender and then hold a kitchen towel over the top of the blender*. Be careful when blending hot liquids as the mixture can spurt out of the blender. Pulse the blender to start it and then puree until smooth. Return to the pan and add cream, stir over high heat until hot. For a smoother flavor bring soup to a boil, add salt and pepper, to taste.

Ladle into bowls and garnish with dollop sour cream and parsley sprigs.

*** Take care with hot liquids in a blender by either separating half at a time or using an immersion blender.

Source:

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/ginger-carrot-soup-recipe.html>

